

A HISTORICAL CATECHISM:²

CONTAINING

Ingenious Answers to many notable Questions of several wonderful Matters in

ANCIENT HISTORY.

As, what is the opinion of all our historians about the Apple old Mother Eve tempted Adam with. Why the devil should take the shape of a serpent. Of the building of the tower of Babel near miles round by 500,000 men, who left off, confounded in their language. Also serious questions about Sodom and Gomorrah, Noah's Ark and Solomon's Temple. Informing us from scripture, what day that was that the like was never before, nor ever shall be. Likewise giving a full account of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the slaughter of three millions of Jews, and how the remainder were dispersed and scattered over the face of the whole earth. Also Josephus and the Roman account of our Saviour, and the miracles wrought at his birth. Particularly a remarkable story about the great Mogul and a divine spirit with a wonderful apparition that happened at Mahomet's Tomb. The wonderful prophecies of the ten Sybils, and a marvellous relation of seven sleepers, who slept about 300 years.

GLASGOW.

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MDCCLXXXIX.

The HISTORICAL CATECHISM.

Quest. **W**HAT apple or fruit was it that Adam eat in Paradise, and thereby brought sin and death upon him and all his posterity?

Ans. It is uncertain, for the holy scriptures mention it not; and authors vary in their opinion; some say it was a Persian apple growing where Paradise was situated; others imagine it was a golden apple, a cherry, or a pear; but the ancient Romans believe it was a musk apple.

Q. What may be the reason why the devil should assume the shape of a serpent above all other creatures, and that out of the putrefaction of man's body worms are produced?

A. Melancthon says, From man's being deluded by the serpent in paradise, the devil delighted in that shape, and out of man's corruption and the filth of his sin, worms and serpents do spring; for man being prone to sin, from the putrefaction of his body, such creatures are ingendered, as a mark of our original sin.

Q. What account doth the ancients give of Babel?

A. It was the most famous structure after Noah's flood; for Nimrod persuaded the people to build a large and high edifice, to resist the fury of a second deluge. They built this tower, 9164 paces from the ground; the going up was winding and broad, there being not only room for horses and carts, but lodging for men and beasts, with grass and corn fields, and wonderful it was to consider, that but eight persons came out of Noah's ark, this building was carried on by 400,000 men, the foundation being nine miles round: but God confused their tongues, and put a stop to their work, not one being able to understand another, as express by the poet.

Bring me, quoth one, a trowel quickly, quick
One brings him up a hammer; hew this brick,
Another bids, and then they cleave a tree;
Make fast this rope, and then they let it flee;
One calls for planks, another mortar lacks;
They bring the first a stone, the last an ax.
One would have nails, and him a spade they give,
Another asks a saw, and gets a sieve!
Thus cross'd they call, and rail in vain,
What one hath made, another spoils again,
Thus made them leave, their work and like made fools,
Scatter their stuff, and tumble down their walls.

Q. Why were mens lives longer before Noah's flood than since?

A. As the world declines, so does the nature of all there-

in meteors, comets and eclipses, that produce diseases, were then seldom seen, together with our excessive drinking, which destroys more than the sword.

Q. What day was that, the like was never before or since?

A. When Joshua prayed in the midst of the battle, so that the sun stood still, and hastened not to go down until it made the day 24 hours long, whereas naturally it was but 12 or 15 hours.

Q. What part of the earth was that which was seen only four times of mankind?

A. The bottom of the river Jordan divided by God, passed over by Moses and the children of Israel; seen after by Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha.

Q. What do the historians say of Solomon's temple?

A. The temple was built on a rocky foundation, 200 cubits deep, the stones forty cubits high, porches double supported by stately pillars 25 cubits high, of marble, the tops of cedar. The porches 20 cubits broad. The courts paved with all sorts of stones like fine latices, all the gates covered with plates of gold. The Holy of Holies was in the midst. The finest gate 20 cubits high, and had 20 doors; all the fore parts were gilded, and within covered with fine gold, about the wall was a golden vine, the clusters like grapes of gold, each cluster six feet long. It had golden gates and hinges wrought with gold, and had the fabric covered with massy gold.

The tops were set with rods of gold sharp like spikes, lest birds should sit thereon and defile it. The temple was first built by King Solomon, and afterwards plundered by Siseback King of Egypt and others: but lastly by Nebuchadnezzar, who laid this city and temple even to the ground. Yet after that, rebuilt by Herod the great: but about forty years after the death of our Saviour, the sins of the Jews being come to their height, it was destroyed by Titus, son of Vespasian, emperor of Rome.

Q. What were the dreadful signs and wonders which foretold the destruction of Jerusalem?

A. The year before the Romans came, a bright star appeared over the temple, as if a man had held many drawn swords in his hands, and the temple was as light as at noon-day, seven nights together. A heifer being knocked down for sacrifice, brought forth a lamb. A man's face was seen in the Holy of Holies looking very earnestly. Four chariots with horsemen were seen fighting in the air. In the temple the priest heard a terrible voice, saying, "Come let us go out of the temple, let us hasten from hence." But they regarded them not till sudden destruction fell upon them.

Q. What country is looked upon to be the most desolate and solitary in the world?

A. The land about Sodom and Gomorrah; where were 13 cities built on a fruitful soil, a second paradise, but they sinned greatly, for which God rained down brimstone and fire from heaven, which destroyed their land, leaving not one stone upon another, nor any witness of their former splendor or glory, but a poisonous smell of fire and brimstone; which, by its vapours, stifles the birds that fly over this stinking lake, that they fall down dead, and the fish that are carried into it out of the river Jordan, are choaked with it. Instead of pulpy vine, there are now some apples of a glorious appearance, but within are full of sulphurous ashes.

Q. What became of the Jewish nation, after that wicked act of crucifying the Lord?

A. God's judgments according to their deserts, and our Saviour's prophecy overtook them; for the Romans with a great army besieged, plundered and burnt the city and temple. There perished by famine, fire, sword, and quarrels, 11000 people; the siege beginning at the time of the passover, in a manner when all the Jews in Palastine were enclosed in that city, so that there were in it more strangers than inhabitants. The passover that was first instituted by God in mercy, to save the Israelites from death in Egypt, was now used by him in justice to hasten their destruction, and consumed them in the fire of his anger. And those that escaped, became a scattered people over the whole earth.

Q. What became of the remainder.

A. Besides these that were slain, 97,000 were taken captives, and they who had bought our Saviour's blood off Judas for 30 pieces of silver, were themselves sold for thirty a penny. The christians that were in the city being forewarned of our Saviour's predictions, and many other prodigies, fled betimes out of Jerusalem to Pella, a town beyond Jordan, which served instead of a little Zoar, to save them from imminent destruction.

Q. Was there ever any attempt made to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem?

A. Yes: Julian the apostate, emperor of Rome, resolved to build it in opposition to Christ's prophecy, "That one stone should not be left upon another," but when the workmen were laying the foundation, a dreadful earthquake happened, so that the work and the workmen were destroyed.

Q. What did they discover at laying the foundation?

A. There was a stone which slipped from its place, and discovered the mouth of a cave, wherein was found a book very fresh, wrapt in linnen cloth, which the Jews and Grecians opened, and therein found written, **IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE**

WORD WAS GOD. Which contained all the Gospel that St. John had declared.

Q. What account doth Josephus give of our Saviour?

A. That Jesus was a wise man, shewed wonders and taught the truth to them that followed him.

Q. What miracles happened at the birth of Christ?

A. At his birth the temple of Rome dedicated to an heathen goddess, fell to the ground. When it was first built the Romans enquired of their oracle Apollo, how long it should stand? Who answered, "Till a virgin should bring forth a Son:" which made them think it would stand for ever. St. Jerom says, When the Virgin Mary fled with her Son to Egypt, all images of their gods fell down, and oracles and devils ceased.

Q. What is farther related of the death of Christ, besides we find in the holy Scriptures?

A. In the 20th year of our blessed Saviour's life he was crucified by the wicked Jews, which produced prodigious effects, attested as well by Heathens as Christians. At his death there was a great darkness in the day-time, from 3 o'clock, at which time our Saviour gave up the Ghost, till 6, and yet there was no eclipse of the sun, it being then full moon: so that it was only by the power of God, who deprived the sun of its light for that space of time. And Dionisius being that day at Athens, and knowing by the course of the heavens, that this eclipse must be unnatural, cried out, "Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers!" And the wise men at Athens being astonished at this prodigy, ordered an altar to be built, and dedicated it to the unknown God, for which St. Paul reprov'd them, declaring that Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world, who had suffered death by the Jews, was the unknown God; whereby he converted many to the Christian faith.

Q. Is there not another relation of this?

A. Yes, Plutarch published the following account, That his father coming by sea, towards Italy, and coasting about the Island Paraxis, when all the ship's crew were at rest, they heard a dreadful voice from that Island, calling to Alaman who was pilot of the ship, and an Egyptian born: this voice was heard twice, yet none had the courage to answer, till at the third call, Alaman cry'd, Who calls? What would you have? The voice then spake louder, and said, "When you pass near the gulf of Laguna, I charge you to cry aloud, and make them to understand, that the great god Pan is dead." The ship's company were astonished thereat, but concluded he should take no notice of the voice, but proceed on their voyage. When they came to the place the ship stood still, so that they could sail no further; whereupon Alaman placed himself upon the poop of the

ship, and cry'd aloud, "Be it known unto you that the great god Pan is dead." He had no sooner said this, but the air echoed with mournful cries, which surprised those in the ship. But having afterwards a prosperous gale to Rome, told the emperor. The same author owns that about this time, not only the oracles of Egypt ceased, but throughout the whole world, for which he could give no reason, but that Satan did plainly confess himself to be overthrown by the death of Christ, and could never again give any answers.

Q. What account did the Romans give of Christ?

A. In the reign of Tiberius Cesar, Lentulus the Roman Governor of Judea, wrote the following letter.

"There appeared in those days, a man of great virtue, called Jesus Christ, who is yet living among us, and by the people is called a prophet, but his disciples call him the Son of GOD. He raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner of diseases, a man of stature, somewhat tall and comely, with a reverend countenance, such as the beholders may both fear and love. His hair is of the colour of a chesnut full ripe, and plain down almost to his ears, but from thence downward somewhat curled, but more orient of colours waving about his shoulders. In the midst of his head goeth a seem of his hair, like the Nazarens; his face beautified with a comely red; his mouth and nose so formed, that nothing can be reprehended. His beard thick, the colour of the hair of his head. His eyes grey, clear and quick. In reproving he is severe, in counselling courteous, fair spoken, pleasant in speech, mixt with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any body has seen him laugh, but often to weep. In proportion of body well shaped and straight; his arms and hands delectable to behold. In speaking very temperate, modest and wise. A Man for his singular beauty, far exceeding the sons of men."

Q. Is there not a strange relation of an apparition that happened at Mahomet's tomb?

A. Mr Knowls in his history of the Turks, affirms as a certain truth, that in 1620, a surprising vision was seen at Medina in Arabia, where Mahomet lies buried, which continued 20 days, terrifying the whole country. September 22th in that year, a great tempest of wind, rain and thunder happened about midnight, but when the sky became clear, the people might plainly read in Arabian characters, these words, "Oh! why will you believe in lies?" and between two and three in the morning appeared a woman in white, seeming to be encompassed with the sun, having a cheerful countenance, with a book in her hand, over against her were seen armies of Turks, Persians, Arabians, and other Mahometans in battle array, ready to fight with her, but

the keeping her station, only opening the book, at which the armies fled, and presently all the lamps about Mahomet's tomb went out, for when the vision vanished, an hour before sun-rising, a murmuring wind was heard, to which they imputed the extinguishing of the lamps.

Q. Is there not a remarkable story of the great Mogul in the East Indies.

A. Yes, it happened some years before Sir Thomas Rowe was ambassador for King James the first to his court, that a juggler of Bengal brought an ape before the Mogul that did many strange feats: the King, to try his skill, plucked a ring off his finger, and gave it to one of his boys to hide, which he presently discovered: at last this strange fancy came into his head, there are many disputes, says he, concerning the true Prophet that should come into the world. We are for Mahomet, the Persians magnify Mettis Ally: the Hindoes or Heathens extol Braman Raman and others; the Jews are for Moses, and the Christians for Christ, adding several others to the number of twelve, whose names he caused to be written on twelve scrolls and put in a bag; this done, the ape puts in his paw among them and pulls out the name of Christ. He then caused the names to be written a second time on other scrolls, and the ape again pluckt out the name of Christ as before. Upon this one of the Mogul's favourites said it was an imposture of the Christians, and desired a third trial, with only eleven names, reserving that of Christ's in his hands. The ape searching as before, pulled out his empty paw; whereupon the Mogul was told, that possibly the thing he looked for was not there; the ape was bid to search for it, who bringing those 11 names one after another, in seeming indignation rent them all to pieces; and catching the favourite by the hand, where the name of Christ was concealed, opened and held it up to the Mogul without tearing the same. Upon which the Mogul gave his keeper a pension calling him the Divine Ape. The truth whereof, saith Mr Tery, captain to Sir Thomas Rowe, is confirmed by several persons of different religions.

Q. What were these women called Sybils who prophesied of our blessed Lord, some hundreds of years before he was born.

A. They were reckoned to be ten in number, and to have the spirit of prophecy, and uttered many speeches concerning Christ, very agreeable to those of the Jewish prophets, or rather in more plain terms than they, though the Heathens to whom they were spoken understood them not. Yea they are thought of great importance for confirming the truth of the Christian religion, and they are often adduced by the fathers of the primitive church, against the enemies to the faith of Jesus. And Constantine the first Christian emperor

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affirms, that a learned Heathen who lived an hundred years before Christ's nativity, gives an account at large of the number, writings, country, and ages of the ten Sybils; and the author that mentions them before his time.

Q. What is related in ancient history concerning the seven sleepers?

A. They were born in the city of Ephesus, in the time when Decius, the Heathen Roman emperor persecuted the Christians, these good men being of that profession: whose names were Maximilian, Malobus, Marchianus, Dorimas, John Sarophyom, and Constantius, to avoid torture, and the worship of idols, fled into a cave, in mount Celson, after long praying, watching, and fasting, they fell asleep, the emperor expecting they were in that cave, caused the mouth thereof to be stopt up with stones, so that they might die with hunger. Decius and that generation being dead, Theodocius a Christian Emperor after many years succeeded, at which time a citizen of Ephesus, designing to make a lodge for his shepherds in that cave, and the workmen opening the mouth of it, these seven Christians that had slept all this time, awaked and saluted each other, verily supposing they had but slept one night, and began to remember their heaviness the day before. They sent Malobus to buy bread in the city, and gave him five shillings; coming to the mouth of the cave he wondered to see the masons at work; and going into the city, he found all things altered, and the cross set upon the churches; he then went to them that sold bread, and they spoke of Christ, at which he much wondered that there should be such a change since yesterday, when none durst speak of the true God, but he was now professed openly. But when he offered the baker money for bread, the coin was moulded, then the people said, "Sure this young man hath found some ancient treasure." Upon which they carried him before the bishop and counsel, where he declared that he and six more had hid themselves yesterday in a cave, to escape the cruelty of Decius, and had taken that money with them. The emperor Theodocius being made acquainted therewith, he with many others went and found the other six cheerful and hearty, the garments not being worn by age or time; the emperor thereupon glorified God, embracing and weeping over each of them for joy, saying, "I receive you like so many Lazaruses risen from your graves!" They continued alive some short time after, and then died, and were buried in great pomp and state by the emperor. It appeared they had slept two hundred and eight years.



